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ABSTRACT

As a result of the Morgan-Hart Class Size Reduction Act of 1989, San Juan (California) Unified School District was able to reduce the number of students in freshman English classes from over 30 to 20 in the spring semester 1991. This reduction of at least 10 students per class was a welcome change for high school students and their teachers. The district's Research and Evaluation Department conducted an evaluation study to determine the impact of this class size reduction program. Test scores in reading comprehension made significant gains and the 2543 students in the study earned better grades in English. As a result of smaller classes, students were more actively involved in the instructional process. This was demonstrated by an increase in the number of student reading and writing assignments, more oral presentations and frequent classroom discussions. Students also received increased feedback on their English assignments and teachers had time to work with students individually. From the information collected, it appears that the class size reduction program was well received and successful. (One graph and six unnumbered tables of data are included.) (Author/RS)

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SAN JUAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Research and Evaluation Department
Theresa (Terry) Housden, Ed.D., Director

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION EVALUATION
Freshmen English, Spring 1991

April 1992

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of the Morgan-Hart Class Size Reduction Act of 1989, San Juan Unified School District was able to reduce the number of students in freshmen English classes from over 30 to 20 in the Spring semester 1991. This reduction of at least 10 students per class was a welcome change for high school students and their teachers.

The district's Research and Evaluation Department conducted an evaluation study to determine the impact of this class size reduction program. Test scores in *Reading Comprehension* made significant gains and students earned better grades in English. As a result of smaller classes, students were more actively involved in the instructional process. This was demonstrated by an increase in the number of student reading and writing assignments, more oral presentations and frequent classroom discussions. Students also received increased feedback on their English assignments and teachers had time to work with students individually. From the information collected, it appears that the class size reduction program was well received and successful in San Juan District.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1990, districts were invited to apply for funds for class size reduction under the Morgan-Hart Class Size Reduction Act of 1989. This act (Senate Bill 666), in part, allowed class size reduction in specific 9-12 courses that meet graduation requirements. The class size reduction (one grade level and one subject area) had to average 20 students per class per school.

In the fall of 1990, San Juan District applied for funds to reduce the average class size in ninth grade English classes in all district high schools. Freshmen English was selected since reading and writing skills are utilized by students in all classes. Fortunately, the project application received approval and was implemented in the Spring semester of the 1990-1991 school year.

According to the Act, the goal of the program was to improve student achievement by reducing the student/teacher ratio to an average of 20 to 1 in those high school courses that meet graduation requirements in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

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GOALS/OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT

Although no formal evaluation was required by the state, the district's Superintendent, Dr. George Jeffers, requested that the Research and Evaluation Department evaluate this new program. The following goals and objectives were identified by district staff as expected outcomes of the class size reduction program in the San Juan District.

Goal 1 Improve Student Achievement

A. Improve student test scores. (CTBS/4*)

B. Improve student grades. (Report Card Grades)

Goal 2 Increase Student Involvement

A. Increase the number of student writing assignments. (Student and Teacher Surveys)

B. Increase the number of student oral presentations. (Survey)

C. Increase the time students are actively involved in learning activities. (Survey)

E. Increase teacher/student interactions. (Survey)

To reach the required average class size of 20 for Spring semester freshmen English classes, San Juan District added 54 class sections. This increased the number of English classes from 113 to 167 and resulted in a reduction of over 10 students per class.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The data collection strategies for this project included use of CTBS/4 achievement test results, student grades, and teacher and student surveys to provide information for the district's evaluation. All freshmen were tested in January 1991 and surveys were administered in May 1991. Overall, surveys were completed by 1,924 students and 50 teachers. In addition, English Department chairs were interviewed in June and their comments are also included in this report.

It should be noted that with only one semester experience with this class size reduction program, evaluation findings must be interpreted cautiously.

**Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Fourth Edition*

GOAL 1. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Three types of evaluation information have been used to review student achievement. These include the CTBS/4 *Reading Comprehension* achievement test, student grades, and teacher and student surveys.

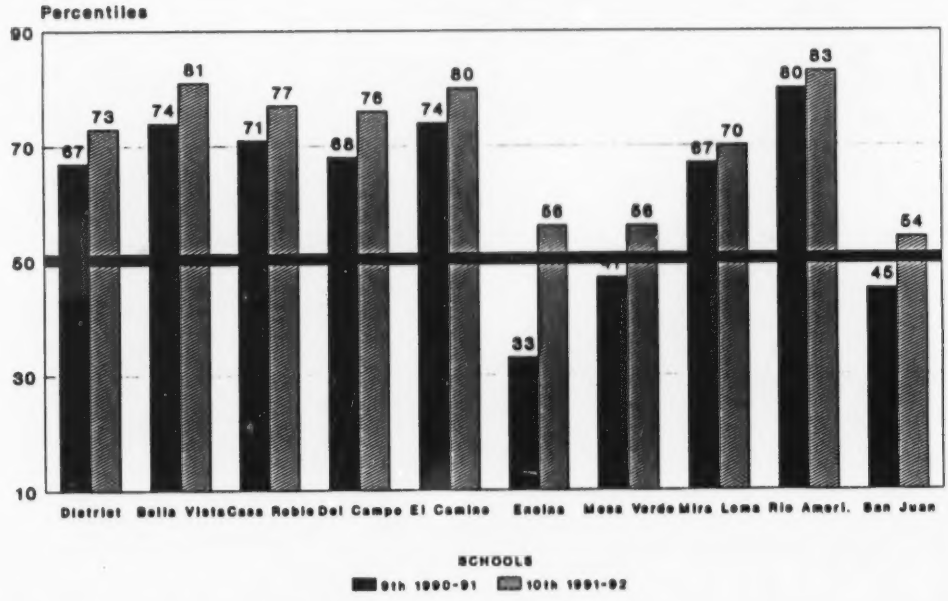
Achievement Test Results

For the objective of "Improving Student Test Scores," 9th grade students were administered part of the CTBS/4 in January 1991. The median percentile in *Reading Comprehension* for all students (N = 2,543) in the district was 67. In December 1991, these students (N = 2,819) who were then in the 10th grade, took the CTBS/4 *Reading Comprehension* test again. Their average (median) percentile increased to 73. This is a significant change from 9th to 10th grade. In addition, the median percentile of 73 in December 1991 is also higher than the median of the previous year's 10th graders of 70.

Increases in test scores from 9th to 10th grade also occurred at every high school in the San Juan District (see chart below). In fact, some of the lower achieving schools (Encina, Mesa Verde and San Juan) demonstrated dramatic increases.

Over a one-year period, high school students participate in numerous educational programs and it is sometimes difficult to factor out the impact of the one specific program. However, test scores in *Reading Comprehension* did increase, and reducing the average class size in English to 20 seems to be a probable cause.

CTBS/4, Reading Comprehension
9th Grade 1990-91 To 10th Grade 1991
Median Percentiles



Grades

One of the major objectives of the improved achievement goal was that students earn more A's and B's and fewer D's and F's. The student survey had three items related to grades and the results are as follows:

Survey Item	"Strongly Agree" or "Agree" Students	Teachers
My English grade has improved this semester.	60.6%	79.6%
I know more about how well I am doing in English this semester.	70.9%	--
I am learning more in English this semester than last.	61.3%	--

Actual semester grades for English are listed below. The three courses taken by almost all of the ninth grade students are: English I; English IX; and Honors English I. The following are the Fall and Spring semester grades for these courses and for all freshmen English courses.

FRESHMEN GRADES IN ENGLISH, 1990-91

Course	Semes-ter	Enroll-ment	A's & B's	D's & F's	A	B	C	D	F
English I	Fall	1711	31%	37%	10%	21%	31%	23%	14%
	Spring	1874	40%	30%	14%	26%	30%	18%	12%
English IX	Fall	740	58%	10%	18%	40%	32%	7%	3%
	Spring	515	61%	14%	26%	35%	25%	11%	3%
Honors English I	Fall	492	76%	7%	37%	39%	17%	5%	2%
	Spring	525	81%	5%	40%	41%	14%	4%	1%
Total Freshmen English	**Fall**	**2943**	**46%**	**25%**	**17%**	**29%**	**29%**	**16%**	**9%**
	Spring	**2917**	**51%**	**22%**	**21%**	**30%**	**27%**	**14%**	**8%**

For the total freshmen group of over 2900 students, the Spring semester grades (representing the class size reduction program) had three (3) percent fewer D's and F's and an increase of five (5) percent in A's and B's.

Since Spring semester grades are sometimes different than Fall semester grades, the Spring semester grades for Freshmen English for 1989, 1990, and 1991 are presented in the following table.

FRESHMAN GRADES IN ENGLISH, SPRING 1989, 1990 AND 1991

Year	Enrollment	A's & B's	D's & F's	A	B	C	D	F
1989	2914	47%	24%	16%	31%	29%	16%	8%
1990	2879	48%	23%	17%	31%	28%	14%	9%
1991	**2917**	**51%**	**22%**	**21%**	**30%**	**27%**	**14%**	**8%**

When English grades from the Spring semester 1991 are compared to the previous two years, students received slightly more A's and B's with the largest change in the percent A's. That is, in 1991, 21% of the freshmen earned A's and in 1989 and 1990, 16% and 17% of the students were awarded A's. The percent of D's and F's during this time period continued in a slow downward trend (dropped 1 - 2 percent).

GOAL 2. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Student Writing

The objective of increasing the number of student writing assignments was investigated through a survey item. Over half of the students (61.4%) "strongly agree" or "agree" that they completed more writing assignments in the Spring semester when class sizes were reduced. Most teachers (81.6%) also "strongly agreed" or "agreed" the students wrote more.

Oral Presentations

Other survey items were directed toward determining if students had increased the number of oral presentations. The results are as follows:

	"Strongly Agree" or "Agree"	
Survey Item	Students	Teachers
More student oral presentations.	47.2%*	70.8%
More student class discussions and presentations.	66.6%	95.9%

**Some teachers reported that they felt the students only counted formal oral presentations rather than including the short oral reports that are part of more general classroom participation.*

More Active Involvement

Another similar objective was to increase the time students are actively involved in learning activities. In addition to the items listed above, six additional items related to this objective. The results of these are:

Survey Item	"Strongly Agree" or "Agree" Students	Teachers
More class participation by students.	68.8%	91.9%
Number of reading assignments has increased.	68.0%	64.6%
More feedback on English assignments.	69.0%	95.9%
Better understanding of how to do English assignments.	70.9%	--
Homework assignments are clear and cover material presented in class.	79.1%	97.9%
Class and homework assignments are challenging.	63.8%	97.9%

Student/Teacher Interaction

For the objective indicating that there will be an increase in student/teacher interactions, four survey items and their results were as follows:

Survey Item	"Strongly Agree" or "Agree" Students	Teachers
Teachers have more time to work with students.	70.4%	96.0%
The teacher cares about me and my achievement in class.	74.7%	--
Am able to get more help from my English teacher before or after class.	56.4%*	78.0%
More student/teacher interaction.	72.0%	95.9%

**A number of teachers were concerned about this survey item because many students did not take advantage of the extra help even though it was available.*

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